

CAREER GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

SOC Code: 21-1021, 21-1022, and 21-1023

Pay Band(s): 3, 4 and 5 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Descriptions: The three specialty groups of Social Worker Occupations described in the Standard Occupational Descriptions are:

Child, Family, and School Social Workers:

Provide social services and assistance to improve the social and psychological functioning of children and their families and to maximize the family well being and the academic functioning of children. May assist single parents, arrange adoptions, and find foster homes for abandoned or abused children. In schools, they address such problems as teenage pregnancy, misbehavior, and truancy. May also advise teachers on how to deal with problem children.

Medical and Public Health Social Workers:

Provide persons, families, or vulnerable populations with the psychosocial support needed to cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses, such as Alzheimer's, cancer, or AIDS. Services include advising family caregivers, providing patient education and counseling, and making necessary referrals for other social services.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers:

Assess and treat individuals with mental, emotional, or substance abuse problems, including abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and/or other drugs. Activities may include individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, case management, client advocacy, prevention, and education.

Social Worker positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Counseling Services Career Group](#):

[Counselor I](#)

[Counselor II](#)

[Counselor Manager](#)

While Social Workers within the Commonwealth are all located within the Counseling Services Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Health Care Compliance](#)

[Direct Service](#)

[Program Administration](#)

[General Administration](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Social Workers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

1. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
2. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
3. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
4. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
5. Actively looking for ways to help people.
6. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
7. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
8. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem solving and decision-making.
9. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
10. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.

Knowledge

Note: The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Social Workers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Knowledge** of:

1. Human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
2. Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
3. Principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.
4. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
5. Group behavior and dynamics, societal trends and influences, human migrations, ethnicity, cultures and their history and origins.
6. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
7. Laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process.

8. Circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming.
9. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
10. Administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.

Abilities

Note: The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Social Workers commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

The **Ability** to:

1. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
2. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
3. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
4. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
5. Identify and understand the speech of another person.
6. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
7. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
8. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
9. See details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
10. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Social Workers. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

Child, Family, and School Social Workers

1. Interview clients individually, in families, or in groups, assessing their situations, capabilities, and problems, to determine what services are required to meet their needs.
2. Counsel individuals, groups, families, or communities regarding issues including mental health, poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, physical abuse, rehabilitation, social adjustment, childcare, and/or medical care.
3. Maintain case history records and prepare reports.
4. Counsel students whose behavior, school progress, or mental or physical impairment indicate a need for assistance, diagnosing students' problems and arranging for needed services.
5. Consult with parents, teachers, and other school personnel to determine causes of problems such as truancy and misbehavior, and to implement solutions.
6. Counsel parents with child rearing problems, interviewing the child and family to determine whether further action is required.
7. Develop and review service plans in consultation with clients, and perform follow-ups assessing the quantity and quality of services provided.

8. Collect supplementary information needed to assist client, such as employment records, medical records, or school reports.
9. Address legal issues, such as child abuse and discipline, assisting with hearings and providing testimony to inform custody arrangements.
10. Provide, find, or arrange for support services, such as child care, homemaker service, prenatal care, substance abuse treatment, job training, counseling, or parenting classes, to prevent more serious problems from developing.

Medical and Public Health Social Workers

1. Collaborate with other professionals to evaluate patients' medical or physical condition and to assess client needs.
2. Investigate child abuse or neglect cases and take authorized protective action when necessary.
3. Refer patient, client, or family to community resources to assist in recovery from mental or physical illness and to provide access to services such as financial assistance, legal aid, housing, job placement or education.
4. Counsel clients and patients in individual and group sessions to help them overcome dependencies, recover from illness, and adjust to life.
5. Organize support groups or counsel family members to assist them in understanding, dealing with, and supporting the client or patient.
6. Advocate for clients or patients to resolve crises.
7. Identify environmental impediments to client or patient progress through interviews and review of patient records.
8. Utilize consultation data and social work experience to plan and coordinate client or patient care and rehabilitation, following through to ensure service efficacy.
9. Modify treatment plans to comply with changes in clients' status.
10. Monitor, evaluate, and record client progress according to measurable goals described in treatment and care plan.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers

1. Counsel clients in individual and group sessions to assist them in dealing with substance abuse, mental and physical illness, poverty, unemployment, or physical abuse.
2. Interview clients, review records, and confer with other professionals to evaluate mental or physical condition of client or patient.
3. Collaborate with counselors, physicians, and nurses to plan and coordinate treatment, drawing on social work experience and patient needs.
4. Monitor, evaluate, and record client progress with respect to treatment goals.
5. Refer patient, client, or family to community resources for housing or treatment to assist in recovery from mental or physical illness, following through to ensure service efficacy.
6. Counsel and aid family members to assist them in understanding, dealing with, and supporting the client or patient.
7. Modify treatment plans according to changes in client status.
8. Plan and conduct programs to prevent substance abuse, to combat social problems, or to improve health and counseling services in community.
9. Supervise and direct other workers who provide services to clients or patients.
10. Develop or advise on social policy and assist in community development.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Social Work occupations have **Social, Artistic, Investigative and Enterprising** characteristics.

Social — Social occupations because they frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

Investigative — Investigative occupations because they frequently involve working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.

Artistic — Artistic occupations because they frequently involve working with forms, designs and patterns. They often require self-expression and the work can be done without following a clear set of rules.

Enterprising — Enterprising occupations because they frequently involve starting up and carrying out projects. These occupations can involve leading people and making many decisions. Sometimes they require risk taking and often deal with business.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally this is not required for Social Worker position in state government. However the Virginia Board of Social Work provides requirements for licensure and continuing competency for those Social Worker interested in licensure. More information on licensure in Virginia is at web site www.dhp.state.va.us/social.

Additionally, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) offers voluntary credentials. Social workers with an MSW may be eligible for the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW), the Qualified Clinical Social Worker (QCSW), or the Diplomate in Clinical Social Work (DCSW) credential based on their professional experience.

Certification is recommended to improve professional growth and career advancement opportunities.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Commonwealth of Virginia's Social Workers are academically qualified as a graduate of a college or university holding a bachelor's degree in social work (BSW) or majors in psychology, sociology, and related fields. Although a bachelor's degree is sufficient for entry into the field, an advanced degree may be beneficial and improve career opportunities. A master's degree in

social work (MSW) is typically required for positions in health settings and is required for clinical work. In addition, a second language can be very helpful. The Commonwealth has Social Workers in a variety of specialty areas. The Department of Labor describes these specialty areas below:

Child, family, and school social workers provide social services and assistance to improve the social and psychological functioning of children and their families and to maximize the family well-being and academic functioning of children. Some social workers assist single parents; arrange adoptions; and help find foster homes for neglected, abandoned, or abused children. In schools, they address such problems as teenage pregnancy, misbehavior, and truancy. They also advise teachers on how to cope with problem students. Some social workers may specialize in services for senior citizens. They run support groups for family caregivers or for the adult children of aging parents. Some advise elderly people or family members about choices in areas such as housing, transportation, and long-term care; they also coordinate and monitor services. Through employee assistance programs, they may help workers cope with job-related pressures or with personal problems that affect the quality of their work. Child, family, and school social workers typically work in individual and family services agencies, schools, or State or local governments. These social workers may be known as child welfare social workers, family services social workers, child protective services social workers, occupational social workers, or gerontology social workers.

Medical and public health social workers provide persons, families, or vulnerable populations with the psychosocial support needed to cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, or AIDS. They also advise family caregivers, counsel patients, and help plan for patients' needs after discharge by arranging for at-home services—from meals-on-wheels to oxygen equipment. Some work on interdisciplinary teams that evaluate certain kinds of patients—geriatric or organ transplant patients, for example. Medical and public health social workers may work for hospitals, nursing and personal care facilities, individual and family services agencies, or local governments.

Mental health and substance abuse social workers assess and treat individuals with mental illness, or substance abuse problems, including abuse of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Such services include individual and group therapy, outreach, crisis intervention, social rehabilitation, and training in skills of everyday living. They may also help plan for supportive services to ease patients' return to the community. Mental health and substance abuse social workers are likely to work in hospitals, substance abuse treatment centers, individual and family services agencies, or local governments. These social workers may be known as clinical social workers.

The Virginia Area Health Education Centers Program lists the following Virginia Educational Institutes that offer an educational program for social workers: Christopher Newport University, Eastern Mennonite University, Ferrum College, George Mason University, James Madison University, Longwood College, Mary Baldwin College Norfolk State University, Radford University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Intermont College, Virginia State University, Virginia Union University, and Virginia Wesleyan College.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be

observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to:

http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Social Workers**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES
3	Counselor I
4	Counselor II

PAY BAND	MANAGER ROLES
5	Counselor Manager

Sample Career Path

Counselor I

The Counselor I role provides career tracks for social workers who perform case management, needs assessment, and supportive counseling in addressing client strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Employees participate in the evaluation of service needs and the development and implementation of individualized plans to assist clients in progressing toward identified goals and obtaining services by making referrals to applicable community resources.

Counselor II

The Counselor II role provides career tracks for clinical social workers who provide the full range of counseling and case management activities. Employees independently develop, implement, and maintain individualized treatment, vocational, employment, service, discharge, or rehabilitation plans for clients and serve as members of interdisciplinary teams.

Counselor Manager

The Counselor Manager role provides career tracks for managers who direct programmatic and administrative functions related to the provision of counseling services as well as monitoring the delivery of services, coordinating budget development, and developing, interpreting, and implementing policies.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>

Department of Health Professions

<http://www.dhp.virginia.gov/>

Council on Social Work Education

<http://www.cswe.org>

Association of Social Work Boards
<http://www.aswb.org>

Professional Organization

National Association of Social Workers
<http://www.socialworkers.org/>

National Association of Social Workers
Virginia Chapter
<http://www.naswva.com/>